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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1478

RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3523

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1047

RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1959

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003058

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, INR/EAP, EAP/PD,
NSC FOR E.PHU

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TAGS: PREL PGOV KPAO KISL ID BM

SUBJECT: WEST JAVA -- OUTREACH IN INDONESIA'S MOST POPULACE
PROVINCE

REF: JAKARTA 2241

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Pol/C visited Bandung, the capital of West Java, October 31 - November 1. Pol/C--in a public outreach event--underscored the close links shared by the U.S. and Indonesia to a large, lively group of university students, who had many questions about U.S. policy in the Middle East and Burma. Pol/C also met West Java's Governor, who discussed the upcoming gubernatorial election--the first such direct vote in the region's long history. END SUMMARY.

OUTREACH IN BANDUNG

¶2. (U) Pol/C spoke November 1 at Padjadjaran University in Bandung. The university, which is public, has about 40,000 students. It is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary since its establishment. Pol/C spoke to approximately 150 undergraduate and graduate students plus faculty and administration officials. In his remarks, Pol/C emphasized the vitality of U.S.-Indonesian relations. Pol/C noted how important reform was, commenting that--although Indonesia was already a successful democracy--more progress needed to take place in the areas of accountability and good governance. Accountability was vital; individuals needed to be brought to justice if they were corrupt or committed human rights violations.

¶3. (U) Regarding international relations, Pol/C noted that Indonesia was beginning its one-month tenure as President of the UN Security Council, a prestigious position. Indonesia needed to do the right thing regarding Iran's nuclear program and support stability in Iraq. Indonesia's role as a peace-keeper was also vital; its forces in Lebanon were playing an important function and the international community appreciated its plans to send a police unit to Darfur.

¶4. (U) Pol/C also highlighted the situation in Burma, condemning the brutal crackdown and the ongoing detention of democratic activists. Pol/C placed a spotlight on U.S. steps--including new, targeted sanctions--against the regime and our support for UN Special Envoy Gambari's efforts. Pol/C stressed that Indonesia--as East Asia's largest

democracy and a force in ASEAN--needed to play an enhanced role regarding Burma, including by taking a forthright stand at the upcoming ASEAN Summit and other ASEAN-related meetings in Singapore.

¶5. (U) The students had many questions about U.S. Middle East policy. Some of them were critical of the U.S. and the decision to invade Iraq. One student wondered whether the U.S. planned to deal in a military way with Iran. Pol/C stressed the USG's commitment to diplomacy, noting intensive U.S. efforts to arrange a Middle East Peace Conference involving the Israelis and Palestinians. Other students asked about Burma, wondering how they could help. Pol/C stressed that they should get involved with civil society groups, and press the national government and legislature to take steps to further isolate the regime. One student asked about a discussion on Oprah about international relations, and why many Americans were apparently not interested in the subject and did not own passports. Another student asked about press reports that U.S. diplomats were being assigned for Iraq duty on a non-voluntary basis.

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

¶6. (U) Pol/C and Pol FSN visited Bandung, the capital of West Java, October 31 - November 1. West Java, with about 40 million people, is the most populous province in Indonesia. Bandung, with about three million people, is the third-largest city. Bandung--located about 180 kilometers southeast of Jakarta--and the West Java region are generally considered economically prosperous relative to other areas in Indonesia.

¶7. (C) All of Pol/C's interlocutors--from the governor's office, the mayor's office, the business and academic communities, etc.--stressed how calm the political situation

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was in the province. Although the province once had a reputation for widespread Muslim militancy in the 1940-'50s, the area no longer had any pockets of significant hard-line thinking, according to contacts. (Note: Members of the terrorist group Jemah Islamiyah hold the post-World War II "Darul Islam" West Javan Muslim revolt in high esteem.) Some youths affiliated with Islamic groups were sometimes active in Bandung, holding rallies, etc., but they were not violent.

(Note: They can be threatening, however: in August, a small group of protesters disrupted a visit by the current Miss Universe, causing her to cut her trip short -- see reftel.) Chinese Indonesian businessmen told Pol/C that they had never encountered any significant prejudice as Chinese or Christians. They said, however, that in rural areas of West Java they had heard of several cases of new churches being forced to close by Muslim vigilantes. The incidents allegedly took place during the past several years.

FOCUS ON ELECTIONS

¶8. (C) With respect to politics, West Javans are focused on elections. In April 2008, West Java will hold its first direct vote ever for governor and in September 2008, direct local elections--including for the mayoralty of Bandung--will be held for the first time. In an October 31 meeting with Pol/C, Governor Danny Setiawan--sitting at his huge hardwood desk in an expansive office from which Dutch colonial administrators once worked--said the West Javan government was actively making preparations for the vote. When asked by Pol/C whether he planned to run, Setiawan sipped on his West Javan-grown tea and ruminated for a moment, finally commenting: "I really have not yet decided, but will think about it early next year."

¶9. (C) Many contacts told Pol/C that they thought Setiawan--who was selected as governor about four years ago by the local legislature--would run and would probably win. Although he has a bit of a chequered reputation due to

various corruption allegations, Setiawan is amiable and considered effective in delivering constituent services. He is a relatively influential member of the Golkar Party, the largest in the country, and a good friend of Vice President and Golkar Chair Jusuf Kalla. Setiawan wondered whether the U.S. would send observers for the election; Pol/C remarked that that needed further review, but we fully expected that--in line with recent elections in Indonesia--the vote would be conducted in a free and fair way.

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